MEMBERS EXCHANGE

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WORKING TOGETHER

In this issue we explore the many ways that artists and collectors work together. That may be in a workshop setting, a collaboration or by commission, ...or simple camaraderie.

Clockwise from top - Diane Herbert, Heidi Wastweet, Rosanne Maraziti, Dan Kraus, and Sandra Deiana
Medals produced at Brookgreen Workshops

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Members,

This is my first letter as your new AMSA president, so let me say 'thank you' to everyone who voted in our recent election. I know we did not have a slate heavy with contested elections to the different offices, but thank you for taking the time to vote. Our organization is only as strong as the people who are involved in it. Thank you very much.

Related to myself and others being elected, thank you also to Heidi Wastweet and others who have served in leadership positions in AMSA, and who have recently stepped down. Your leadership has been vital to AMSA, and you are greatly appreciated.

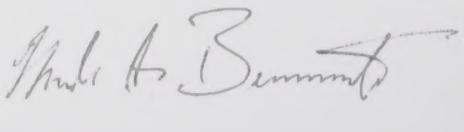
Aug 27th we had 24 members attend our first Zoom all-members meeting. For future meetings of the membership, I welcome your feedback regarding good topics, presentations, and time slots. We chose a Sunday afternoon for the first meeting since most people are not working at that time – but another time might serve us better. I think we have some extremely talented people in AMSA, and at future meetings, I would love to have them speak about their work, what went into creating it, and what their motivation is for making medals. If you have ideas, please contact me at benvenma@udmercy.edu, or text me at 248-219-5430. If it is your first time texting me, please let me know who you are, as I have a good number of students texting at that number as well.

This October brings with it the FIDEM congress in Florence, Italy. Several AMSA members have indicated that they will attend, and so I suspect we are all looking forward to the event. For the next Members Exchange (Dec.), we encourage you to submit your photos and/or articles about your experience there.

As we move forward, I ask you, our members, to think about how we can expand our membership. I think an easy way might be for every member to simply mention AMSA to a friend who has some interest in art medals, either as a sculptor, or as a collector, and encourage them to join. I suspect there are other ways to get the word out about this wonderful organization. I look forward to hearing any and all suggestions. Please do not be shy about sending them.

Once again, thank you for entrusting a leadership role in AMSA to me. I hope we can make our presence known in wider circles, and expand the love of art medals to as many friends as possible.

Mark Benvenuto



TWO MEDALISTS CELEBRATING 52 YEARS OF WORKING TOGETHER

Jeff and Lindley Briggs

In 1969 we met while working in the kitchen of a Viennese restaurant. Jeff was a painting major and Lindley was a sculpture major at the Boston Museum School. Upon leaving school we were soon faced with the daunting challenge of making a living as visual artists.

By 1972 we had established a business making fantasy wood sculptures for the craft and interior design markets – Briggs Bugs and Butterflies. Our talent and temperament in the ensuing years transformed our limited production business into a commissioned, customized sculptural design and prototype business – Briggs Design. We created one-of-a kind-sculptures for clients such as Bloomingdales, McDonalds, Bonwit Teller, and the large feet seen in the picture for Timberland. This continued for the next 30 years. When we were commissioned to create a substantial project requiring all our resources, we would collaborate on the project to achieve the desired result.

In between our commercial "put the bread on the table" sculpture projects, we both continued creating personal artworks. We gave each other the freedom to pursue our inspirations. Instinctively we knew an artist's individual drive to express oneself was essential to our mutual happiness. We developed a practice of trying NOT to comment upon or criticize a piece while it was in the beginning stages unless the other partner asked for an opinion.

Often works one of us created would inspire the other in a new direction. That was the case with Jeff's entrance into the art medal community. Lindley encouraged Jeff to create smaller sculptures (while Jeff encouraged Lindley to sculpt larger pieces).

People ask if competition between us is a factor. Our love and our respect for each other's individual careers and the continued equilibrium of our personal achievements have blunted that impulse. When looking back, we are amazed and grateful for the life we have created as a team and as individual artists.

You can view our work at:
https://www.briggssculpture.com

Lindley encouraged Jeff to create smaller sculptures

-

while Jeff encouraged Lindley to sculpt larger pieces

Briggs Bugs & Butterflies
1976

Timberland Feet
1996

Historic New England by Jeff

Harmony by Lindley

Carousel Installation 2015

MEDAL COLLABORATIONS

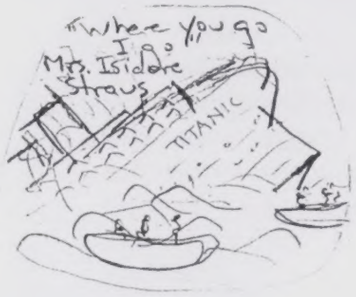
Mel Wacks

Whether you call it guiding, overseeing, collaborating or meddling, I have always respected and enjoyed working with the talented medallists that have created the designs of the Jewish-American Hall of Fame medals for over 5 decades.

Hal Reed originally made a portrait of Houdini without any other design elements on the plaster model for the 1996 medal, but I thought there was too much empty space and asked him to add Houdini's signature and some playing cards

Sculptress Gerta Ries Wiener originally had Isaac Stern wearing a cardigan on the model for our 1982 medal, but I thought he looked too casual and asked her to dress Stern in a tuxedo. She did, but was not very happy about it.

Sometimes I get my two cents in when I give the medalist instructions. In 1998, I gave Alex Shagin a couple of sketches with my ideas for a Titanic medal – that definitely influenced the final designs



And for the 2006 Jewish-American Hall of Fame medal, I asked Eugene Daub to make a jigsaw puzzle desin reflecting on the puzzling aspects of Moe Berg's life. And here is the pleasing result:

Sometimes the sculptor presents me with a few design possibilities, so that I can choose, as Virginia Janssen did in 2007 for the Lillian Wald medal. Which would you pick?

And in 2009, I had the pleasure of choosing the portrait celebrating my 70th birthday – profile, ¾ view or facing -- by Eugene Daub.

I chose the ¾ view:

Pictures courtesy of the Jewish-American Hall of Fame

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MEDAL COMMISSION

Heidi Wastweet

Commissioning a medal can be a mystery and a minefield for the uninitiated. Whether you're the prospective commissioner or prospective artist, let's unpack the steps to a win-win.

It almost goes without saying that the key is communication. Good communication starts by asking the right questions.

WHAT and WHY
The first question is what is the purpose of this medal. The answer to this will lead to all the other decisions. Maybe it is an investment bullion, an event fundraiser, a recognition award, a commemorative, or a single unique gift.

Based on the purpose, we can then choose the quantity needed. This can be a rough estimate at first. If the quantity is low - say 50 or less - it may be either cast or struck. Higher quantities are better struck. Budget can be a factor here too. It's very expensive to strike just one or two medals due to the setup costs.

WHO
Next, an artist and manufacturer need to be selected in harmony. There are a number of ways to go about this. Private mints can help arrange either an in-house artist or an independent artist. On the flip side, a well-versed medallic artist should be able to help select an appropriate manufacturer for their client based on the needs of the project.

An artist may be selected by direct contact, or via competition. Those who are inclined to conduct a competition must understand what they are getting into, the ins and outs of which are beyond the scope of this article.

WHEN
Commissioning a medal can be a lengthy process. Give yourself plenty of time and communicate expectations.

BIDS
The art of the medal happens in two stages - the design, and the model. The modeling can be a physical sculpture (usually plaster), a 3D digital sculpture, or a 2D direct engraving. Those stages can be created by the same artist or two different artists working in relay. If it is done by a single artist, the bid is usually a single price for both stages, based on the complexity of the design. There are no industry standards when it comes to price. It can vary widely from $400 - $5000 per side, or even more. Royalties are rare.

Struck vs Cast

Struck medals are made at a mint where a blank planchette is struck in a press with dies that have been engraved with the medal's design. There are strict limits to the depth of relief. Cast medals are poured at a foundry via the lost wax casting method. Or, the artist may cast the medal themselves in an alternate material such as resin, or by direct fabrication. There are no limits to the depth of the relief with these methods.

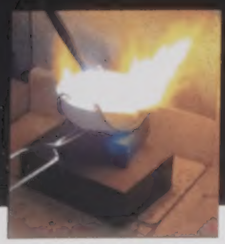
Alternatively, the client may also come to the artist with a set budget and ask them to create a design to fit within the budget.

For struck medals, mints can provide bids on the manufacturing based on size, weight, material, quantity, and complexity of the design. Precious metals are bid separately based on the daily spot price. A die will need to be engraved for each unique side of the medal. Most mints also keep a small selection of house dies which can be used as a reverse, thus saving the client the expense of the second die engraving.

For cast medals, the foundry may bid by piece dimensions, or by weight.

DESIGN
The client may come to the artist with a vision complete with images and reference material, a vague open concept, or really anything in between. A skilled artist sets their ego aside and becomes a conduit to realizing the client's vision while bringing their unique style. Ideally, it is a team effort.

When the client provides the sculptor with a design, a discussion needs to take place about whether the artist has freedom of interpretation or if there needs to be absolute adherence to the artwork. It cannot be assumed either way. It is also crucial that the client provides the artist with ALL of the reference material available. It creates frustration when photo references surface only after the client is unhappy with the results of the artist's finished work.



COPYRIGHT
It is the client's responsibility to provide reference material that is free from copyright infringement. It is the artist's responsibility to create original designs that are not infringing upon others' copyright.

It is generally understood that the artist grants a "use copyright" to the client within the given scope of the project, while the artist retains the so-called "moral rights". The artist does not have the right to sell the design to any future client. Anything more specific needs to be put in writing.

ATTRIBUTION
Medals may be marked with the artist's signature or initials, or they may be marked with both initials of the designer and sculptor. Or not at all.

CONTRACTS
It is entirely up to personal preference whether or not to have a formal contract for each commission. At a minimum, one should have all agreed-upon terms written out in an email. It's not a matter of trust - misunderstanding happens, memories fail. Write it down.

checklist

[ ] Quantity needed
[ ] Timeline
[ ] Dimensions
[ ] Material
[ ] Production method
[ ] Medal finishing/packaging
[ ] Design concept
[ ] Reference Material
[ ] Designer
[ ] Sculptor/engraver
[ ] Manufacturer
[ ] Budget/bids
[ ] Payment methods
[ ] Shipping arrangements

PAYMENT
It is common for a 1/3 deposit, 1/3 on approval, and 1/3 upon delivery. My preferred plan is 1/2 to start and 1/2 on approval, due before delivery. Unfortunately, artists are often the last to get paid and must protect themselves.

It must be clarified upfront how much is refundable in the rare case that the client remains dissatisfied after reasonable attempts to correct the work.

Part of the artist's compensation should, whenever possible, include at least one sample strike or cast for their portfolio.

APPROVALS
There are several approval points along the way. First, approval of the design. The designer may offer one, or several to choose from. They should be flexible in making alterations to please the client. Being pleasant and professional goes a long way.

The client is ultimately responsible for catching spelling errors and misinformation. Once approved, the client must not ask for any design changes after that point.

The sculptor is responsible for making sure the model adheres to the specifications and needs of the manufacturer.

The second approval point is the finished model. The sculptor provides photos with good lighting and makes any needed alterations, within reason, to align with the agreed-upon design.

The third approval comes at the production stage. Mints using digital scanners of models can send digital "proofs". They may send photos of trial strikes for approval. Foundries may send photos of finished casts. It depends on the specific production methods.

FINAL TOUCHES
Don't leave the finishing touches to the last minute. Award medals may need ribbons and presentation boxes. Recipients' names may need to be engraved at a trophy shop. Precious metals need to be protected from tarnish with antiquing/patina or air-tight acrylic capsules. Art medals may look best on display stands. Limited editions may need to be numbered. Some collectors value certificates of authenticity or informational inserts. Plan ahead.

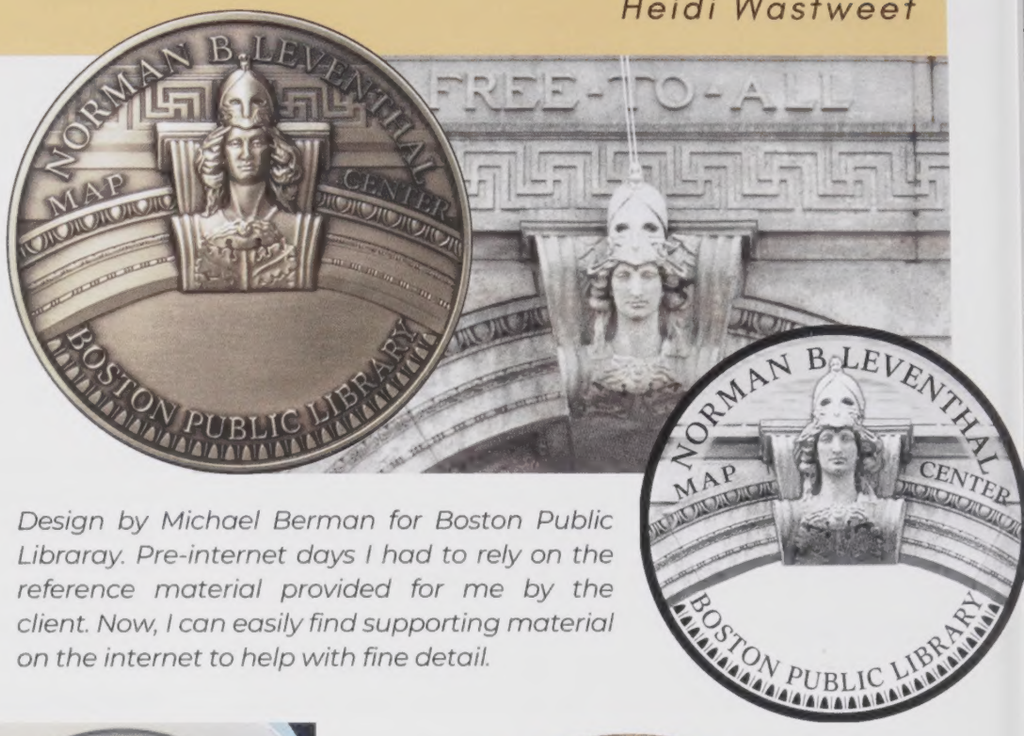
SUCCESS
Commissioned medals are exciting and indelible endeavors. The satisfaction of holding the final result in your hand for the very first time never gets old.

Pictures courtesy of BEX Engraving

SCULPTOR AS INTERPRETER

Heidi Wastweet

One of my favorite things as a sculptor is interpreting two-dimensional images into relief. For me that usually comes in the form of a drawing or layout from a designer that my client wants made into a coin or medal. Ideally, I get to interact with that designer but that does not always happen. Nonetheless, I feel a connection with the designer in that long-distance collaboration. Here are a few memorable pieces.



Design by Michael Berman for Boston Public Libraray. Pre-internet days I had to rely on the reference material provided for me by the client. Now, I can easily find supporting material on the internet to help with fine detail.

Concept and design by Gary Marks for the city of Lebanon Oregon. It was a challenge to portray the plexiglass visor section of the shield. I made a few possible variations and let Gary choose which one he felt most matched his vision. He also provided me with the original photos of his model to help inform my sculpture.

In 2006 my client told me his 6-year-old granddaughter Sarah had taken an interest in our series of Maui Dollars and wanted to design one herself. I said, absolutely! Let's make her dream come true. I chose her drawing, on the left for the main layout, plus the flowers and words from the drawing on the right. The client was thrilled and so was Sarah.

Boston medal struck by Northwest Territorial Mint;
Lebanon Fire Dept struck by Golden State Mint;
Maui Dollar engraved by BEX Engraving,
struck at Global Minting

Design by Jamie Franki for the ANA Convention in 2018. Jamie described to me exactly how he envisioned the multiple levels of the obverse. Even with a beautiful and highly finished drawing, there is still plenty of room for interpretation and added creativity. In fact, the sculpture will never look exactly like the drawing so the way I approach it is not to merely render, but to bring something of myself to the work. We enjoyed working together and in the end we put both of our initials on the medal to mark the selfless spirit of collaboration.

The designer Joel Iskowitz created this lovely drawing for the Bronx Coin Club. He based the reverse on a classic painting depicting the treaty signing. Translating this to relief included suggesting a subtle shift in the placement of the center character on the reverse for extra clarity on the medal.

Both medals struck by Medalcraft Mint

2004 AMERICAN DELEGATION MEDAL • SEIXAL

- *obverse by Mashiko*
- *reverse by Jeanne Stevens-Sollman*
- *casting by Jim Licaretz*
- *bonded bronze*
- *70 x 88 x 30 mm*

JOEL ISKOWITZ WITH LUIGI BADIA

Sentinels of Liberty commissioned by the Abraham Lincoln Foundation, Springfield Ill. Honoring the Sesquicentennial of the Lincoln Funeral

"Working with Maestro Luigi Badia over many years has been a pure joy as we have a profound mutual admiration for each other's fortes - Luigi's powerful and elegantly rendered bas-relief sculpts of what I hope and trust are well-composed narrative designs."

I would also like to give a shout-out to Phebe Hemphill, Don Everhart, Emerson Abraham, and Heidi Wastweet with whom I have enjoyed many successful collaborations."

~ Joel

MICHAEL MESZAROS AND ANNA MESZAROS

Thylacine (right) commonly known as the Tasmanian tiger and the Tasmanian Devil (left).

In 2019, the University of Tasmania contacted me asking me to make the University two new award medals. I had made a number of medals for the University over many years, so they knew my work well.
The problem was that they needed these medals struck in considerable numbers and ready to present in 9 weeks from the time of first contact. Given that my medal striker, Stan Tokarski in Canberra, needed several weeks for production, there was very little time to produce the originals.
The subjects nominated were the extinct Tasmanian Tiger, aka Thylacine, and the Tasmanian Devil, endangered by a strange infectious cancer. To get the work done, I asked my niece Anna, who I have taught medallic sculpture, to help. We agreed that I would do the Thylacine and she would do the Devil. With some bureaucratic delays, we got the modellings done and approved. I did the plaster and lettering work to maintain consistency and the work was done in time.

The Thylacine is signed Michael Meszaros and the Devil is signed Michael and Anna Meszaros.
The medals are 50mm in diameter. The Thylacine is struck in copper and the Devil in tombac.

MEDALIST AND GRANDDAUGHTER

Victor Huster

This parallel minting on the theme of "Children" is meant to contrast with an official commemorative coin: a child participated in the design of this coin for children. The child, Nathalie Tadmor, my seven-year-old granddaughter, eagerly accepted the challenge to sketch and draw ideas, focusing on Germany's federal eagle. Her drawing of the eagle and an eagle's nest with fledgling eaglets was incorporated into the coin draft without any changes and combined with my additional contributions as a joint project. This collaboration resulted in a remarkably cheerful design of a modern coin.

Obv: A slightly opened "Door to the Future", namely the large central "D", reveals Nathalie's federal eagle flying out: the Children of Germany can envision their future with a cheerful national symbol emerging. The inscription "Kinderhilfe" is composed of childish symbols and begins in the left part with a "K" that is made out of building blocks, a pencil serves as the "I", a toy train rides on the handwritten "N", in the middle is the "D", the large future door, a gummy bear in the shape of a dragon is the "E" and a walking stick, "R", alludes to the first writing exercises in first grade. The inscription continues with "HILFE" in a classic style. On the right is a nest with three eagle offspring representing the next generation.

Rv: Some contours of the Obv-eagle are picked up again, now as a more concrete symbol of sovereignty. In its left wing, the door to the future, "D", opens again on hinges with a keyhole that requires the magical key to open the door again, this time to the children's side. Behind it, on the horizon, a rising sun and a European star are visible, symbolizing a better tomorrow for Europe's children. The talons of the eagle alternate between a childlike drawing and an adult style representing the different perspectives of adults and children, and the artistic collaboration between grandfather and granddaughter. The Rev side shows the value number 10 below, the inscription "2022", and the encrypted currency name, "Euro". At the top of the eagle's body is a double signature "NT/ VH". Below are the Hebrew letters "Nun-Aleph" representing 51 years of my artwork on the year this coin was created.

This medal is an example of working together across generations, family members, and cultures. Nathalie is a young German/American/Israeli aspiring artist who loves to draw and sketch. She has inherited my talent and passion for art, and she was delighted to contribute to my medal project. This collaboration shows how art can bridge the gaps and create a bond between different perspectives, experiences, and generations. The coin is a testament to our love and respect for each other, as well as our creativity and skill.

COLLABORATION AND EXECUTION

A collaboration story involving James MaloneBeach and George S. Cuhaj

George S.Cuhaj

Near the end of an enjoyable four days attending the Neuchatel FIDEM in 1998, James MaloneBeach and I were standing against the back wall of the museum gallery where the awards were being presented. As the event progressed the German association gave an award to a German, the Finnish group gave an award to a Finn and this continued with folks not really expanding their boundaries. So I turned to Beach and said, "The US could give a medal to an American medalist." In reply, Beach said, "Well why don't we?" It was decided: at the next FIDEM I'd give an award to me. We named our medal the Cuhaj Award of Distinction, giving us free rein to design according to our brainstorms and to bestow the award to whomever I chose and for whatever reason I chose.

And so the Cuhaj Award of Distinction was conceived. As an Order, we brainstormed the various traditional design elements for the grades - an order collar (for me to wear as the idea and money man), a sash with a large bow and badge (for MaloneBeach to wear as creator/fabricator of the award) and a badge suspended from a neck ribbon for the third class award grade. To complete the ensemble in 2019, Beach fabricated a breast star to compliment my collar.

As time passed, I noticed that a few of the women honorees did not wear their neck ribbon badges, so I asked Beach and Leeny (our expert seamstress) to consider making a bow award for women. Thus, we had another challenge.

We knocked around designs for a few weeks. Beach was content with how the front of the badge was working; it was a colorized photo of me taken on the rooftop sculpture garden of the Metropolitan Museum of Art with the New York skyline in the background. I was wearing a red, white, and blue striped shirt. On the back of the badge was incuse acid-etched "Cuhaj Award of Distinction" in a loose left-handed print. A few of the first medals we distributed are unsigned, but once a production mold was made the initials JMB were added at the bottom of the badge reverse. The three elements of the pendant – a clear plastic cover, the graphic insert, and the back are held together with brass rivets in the corners.

However, Beach didn't want the pendant to be part of the collar he desired it to be suspended. Like the collars for royalty, this collar had to be a symbol of me. Beach was stumped with how to convey this until he woke up abruptly one night and said, "Subway tokens!" He asked me to supply enough tokens to be encased into rings, and united to form the neck chain. In the end I garnered enough examples of two different recent token designs and they are assembled in alternating positions in the finished collar.

So now that we had a sketch and a general plan, photos, tokens and metal stock, we were off and running to create an award group. Beach created the collar and a few neck pendants first, Leeny fashioned the neck ribbons with ties and a nice storage/travel pouch. I made the first award to Steve Brown during the 1997 Trout Run Medal Camp event.

At the 1998 FIDEM Congress at The Hague, Netherlands, I premiered the collar to the wider international audience and made an award of the neck badge to Jeanne Stevens-Sollman.

I was unable to attend the 2000 Weimar, Germany FIDEM, so Beach (wearing his sash) presented Ann Pollack the neck badge. In 2002 I presented Ken Douglas with a neck badge at the opening of the AMSA show at the Ornamental Metal Arts Museum in Memphis, TN.

In 2004 Seixal, Portugal, I was back in attendance and Mashiko received a neck badge. In 2007 Colorado Springs, Philip Atwood and Del Newbigging both received neck badges. In 2010 Tampere, Finland, Ilkka Voionmaa was honored and in 2012 Glasgow, Scotland, Masaharu Kakitsubo received the award.

In 2012 Leeny MaloneBeach and Eileen Cuhaj received the first lady's bow awards during a mid-summer evening party at the MaloneBeach residence. During the 2014 Sofia, Bulgaria FIDEM, a lady's bow was awarded to Erika Grniakova and Reinhold Floren received a neck badge.

At the 2016 Ghent, Belgium congress Beach presented neck badges to Amanullah Haiderzaid and Jan Pelsdonk, whereas Marie-Astrad Pelsdonk received a lady's bow. During the 2018 Ottawa, Canada FIDEM, Susan Taylor received a lady's bow while Ira Rezak and Donald Scarinci received neck badges. Due to COVID travel restrictions, Toshi Yamada received his neck badge by mail before the 2021 Tokyo, Japan FIDEM.

At various times along the process, some interest in the Cuhaj Award of Distinction developed and I was queried regarding the criteria for receipt of the medal. Because distinction takes many forms, some of which are nebulous, my responses were also nebulous. Ultimately when medalists requested specifics of the qualifications, I encouraged them to create their own medals and to establish standards they felt were of value. My general intent was to recognize folks who were giving service to the medallic art community, yet were not in the positions of authority where recognitions usually fell. It was my intent to spawn a medal-giving movement in FIDEM.

And so brings to a close nearly twenty-five years of honoring folks who have made an impact to the world of medallic art. Conversely, my collaborative relationship with Beach continues and we wish you fruitful collaborations as you cultivate your dedication to medallic art.

FINDING CAMARADERIE IN A WORKSHOP

MASTER CLASS
"A MEDAL AS A GESTURE"
2023 LA BOUYSSE FRANCE

Geer Steyn

One of the most intense ways to work with other medalists is in a workshop setting. The energy is high and everyone is inspired by everyone else in the room. It is highly conducive to creativity.

From Geer:

"To make clear the intention of my masterclass I want to add some thoughts. 'The medal is directly coming out of the hand ' From that axiom I have developed a program for a week. What we did is to explore the mentality or climate of the medal, not necessarily a final result. A week is too short, and this gives a relief in the process. Every day I have given a lecture about some medals compared to other art. For instance, to begin with, the first talk: Stonehenge in England, early Greek coins, Pisanello and Richard Long. Shortly, the medal was an independent form of art.

There have been 7 participants this year and I have asked each of them in the evening to give a small talk to show their 'passion and commitment' for art. It has been an intense week from 9 in the morning till 9 in the evening. At the end of the week, every participant gives a copy of his result to the other member of the masterclass. Indeed a form of gesture and camaraderie.

A great success I may say."

2023

Babette Bloch

BROOKGREEN ANNUAL MEDAL

This year's medal by Babette Bloch is titled *Reflecting History, Reflecting Nature*. The obverse features the *Enslaved African Male* from the series of laser-cut stainless-steel figures created by Bloch for the Lowcountry Trail at Brookgreen. The figure is shown with the rice fields stretching behind, emphasizing the historic aspects of the Brookgreen land. The reverse spotlights what appears to be water birds rising from cattails but is actually the upper portion of Bloch's stainless steel sculpture, *Egrets*. Behind the birds is an expanse of sky.

Babette Bloch is a pioneer in the use of laser-cut and water-jet cut stainless steel in creating figurative works of art. Babette, a well-established artist, is married to fellow sculptor and medalist Marc Mellon, who created the 2002 Brookgreen medal.

2002

Marc Mellon